14: Huffman M-5 (no date) 1931
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may generally be traced to a source outside the Nuer. 164
The Nuer have a superstition that dreadful things may happen—the nose may rot away, the head may split down the back—if they contract syphilis. Probably this superstition more than anything else tends to keep them from contracting the disease.

Gonorrhea, like syphilis, is not very common. It, too, may not infrequently be traced to a source which has no connection with the Nuer.

Children and the aged often suffer from malnutrition 146
owing to their limited diet.

A Nuer child has the six central lower teeth removed 753
when he is about six or eight years old. They frequently 752
think that some illness the child has had is due to the teeth, 304
and so have them extracted. Even though there be no illness the teeth are removed while the child is little. There is no such thing in Nuerland as painless extraction of teeth, judging from the cries we have heard and sore mouths we have seen.

Broken bones are also not infrequent, tiny splints for 752
them are made out of cane stalk or some small twigs of a pliable wood. These are placed side by side and laced together, the splint thus formed being tied around the limb at the site of the broken bone.

Spear wounds are occasionally to be seen, but if they are the result of a fight, they are seldom brought to the clinic for medical treatment. The wound is cared for by the relatives of the injured person in the village so that the evil eye may not see the wound and retard its healing.

The art of the medicine man is often sought in order to 755
cure any disease that baffles ordinary treatment. He (or she, as the case may be, for women are also adepts at this art) may remove (?) various things from the throat and stomach, and thereby relieve (?) the cause of distress.

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755 They chant, they spit and blow upon the person. A sheep or an ox may be sacrificed. If the disease is persistent, more sacrifices are offered, more chanting is done. If successful in removing the cause of the disease, or even if the people are satisfied with what he has done, the medicine man usually receives a gift of a sheep or an ox for his services. But if the patient dies while under treatment the price paid is usually returned. The medicine men, or women, as the case may be, or those who are supposed to have a god in them, reap a good harvest in sheep and cattle from those who seek their services for relief from disease.

Medicine men usually wear the hair long and may wear a beard.

757 One common practice that is often resorted to for curative effect is bleeding. In case of a swelling or a bruise or muscular pain, many small cuts are made at the site of the pain in order to let the blood out and presumably the pain with it.

In cases of severe colds the chest is often cut in this way. When patients so treated go to the clinic for medical aid, it is often impossible to rub the chest with oils or apply poultices on account of the effect of such medicines on these little raw cuts.

[136] 164 Scorpions and snakes abound in Nuerland, and cause a great deal of suffering, but few die of snakebite.

The Nuer do not have much malaria. Occasionally one may see a few cases among them.

DEATH AND BURIAL

888 764 The Nuer are kind to their aged and usually respect their opinions, but death in Nuerland and the details of burial are gruesome. The climate of course necessitates quick burial, so as soon as life is extinct preparations must be made.

15: Butt E-4 (No date) 1952 FJ22 Nuer FJ22

791 In certain parts of Nuerland, land experts and prophets claim to be able to produce rain. In certain areas, the leopard-skin chief acts as rain-maker. The title *gwan pini* (owner of water) is given to any ritual specialist who has powers in connection with rain and floods.

The Tiet

The Nuer distinguish clearly between the prophet *(guk)* and the specialist in magic *(tiet)*. The former relies on the sky spirit which possesses and indwells him; the latter relies on various magical substances and actions. The *tiet* has a minor earth spirit, such as a totem spirit. A *tiet* is always a local specialist practising in his own community only, though a magician who possesses powerful magic *(gwan wal)* may become well-known and be recognised by a whole district. All these spirits come under the general category of *kwoth* but[1] three main classes may be distinguished:

1. *Guk.* The prophet in whom a sky spirit dwells.

2. *Tiet.* A specialist in magic, acting as leech and diviner.

3. *Gwan Val.* These are of two types: one using ordinary medicines *(wal)*; another using 'talking medicines'; the latter are owners of fetishes, since their medicines are inhabited by earth spirits known as *kulangni*.

The *tiet gweeni* (mussel shell diviner) answers questions put to him by throwing mussel shells on the convex surface of a gourd and divining from the positions into which they fall on the ground. Every mussel shell diviner has his *kwoth*, the spirit which assists him in his practice.

●[755] The *Tiet Dala* cures headaches, recovers lost property, and performs magic to lessen the watchfulness of those who have stolen cattle so that the true owner may get them back again undetected. He also performs magic to ensure safe journeys and to protect warriors from danger. He possesses love magic. *Tiet ne Ngwet (or Tiet Coli)* removes objects placed by a witch in a sick man's body.

There are also various other specialists[2] who treat barren women, important men and so forth.

NUER MEDICINES *(WAL)*

754 Most of the Nuer medicines have been borrowed from neighbouring peoples, especially from the Dinka; the Nuer, however, endow them with spirits.[3] The most powerful medicines are *kulangni* (talking medicines). Although the earth spirits in the medicines cannot compete in power with the sky spirits, the people fear the owners of fetishes and respect them. In the past a fetish owner was in great danger of being killed by avengers. He was safe among his fellow villagers, for it was believed that a man would not harm a member of his own kin and community; but if a fetish

(1) Evans-Pritchard, *S.N.R.*, 1935, Vol.XVIII, pt.1, p.67.
(2) *Ibid.*, p.70, for fuller details on Nuer magical experts.
(3) *Ibid.*

16: Evans-Pritchard E-5 (1931, 1936) 1956
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It was this spirit, a particularly dangerous one, that was troubling Galuak. Nuer use the word *kap*, to take hold of or to lay hold on, to describe the possession of a man by a spirit. It was known that it was *nai* who was responsible because when the year before Galuak had a similar sickness a prophet of *nai* had divined that he was possessed by this spirit. On that occasion his family had sacrificed goats, but during the past year no sacrifice had been made or ceremony held in the spirit's honour, an omission of which Galuak's family now felt very conscious. In the circumstances a return of the spirit to Galuak might have been expected.

The same prophet had been sent for from a neighbouring village and was expected to arrive before evening. In the meanwhile Galuak's kinsmen sought high and low for a beast to sacrifice right away to *nai*. All animals in the village suitable for sacrifice had recently been killed in other ceremonies (p. 59) and the kinsmen were unable to bring back even a goat for their pains. I was told that *nai* would not, however, kill Galuak in the meantime because it would see that they were trying to find an animal. The prophet arrived, as was expected, in the evening and he was accompanied by two friends. No doubt the matter was discussed in the byre that night, but no action was taken till the following morning.

In the morning, after a talk in the byre, the persons concerned went across to the hut of Galuak's mother, Nyadang, and I was invited to accompany them as a friend of the family. Nhial, Galuak's brother, was working for me. Here the prophet was presented with five piastres—on his visit the year before he had been given a war-spear and a fish-spear. He sat with his back to the wall of the hut, and Galuak and his father, Rainen, sat on a mat facing him and with their backs to the door, which was closely drawn against the entrance to the hut. The windows had been blocked with grass so that the hut was illumined only by faint shafts of light which penetrated round the edges of the door. Even this dim light could not be seen by Galuak and his father, for skins had been placed over their heads so that they might be in total darkness. Altogether there were, besides Galuak and his father, thirteen persons in the hut, sitting with their backs to the wall. The atmosphere was stifling.

The seance began by the prophet shaking his rattle and singing. Karlual, one of Galuak's maternal uncles, also shook a rattle on one side of the prophet and one of the two friends who had

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FIG. 1
Pipe

accompanied him to the village shook a rattle on the other side. The instrument is called *jogh*, possibly a Dinka word. It is a bottle-gourd containing seeds, in this instance the seeds of a wild leguminous plant. While the rattles were being rattled and the prophet sang hymns to *nai* the congregation clapped their hands and smacked them on their thighs in accompaniment. Nuer say that they *pat*, clap, or slap, for the spirit.

After about ten minutes' singing Rainen began to have premonitory spasms. It should be noted that it was not the sick youth but his father who became possessed during the seance. A spirit takes hold of an older and experienced man in cases of this kind and uses him as a medium to make its demands known. As the singing, rattling, and clapping continued, Rainen began to twitch and shake from head to foot and then suddenly leapt into the air and fell back on to the floor of the hut where he lay stiff as though in a paroxysm. After lying tense and prostrate for a while he sat up, but shortly afterwards collapsed again. Then for about a quarter of an hour he threw himself wildly about the hut, writhing and twitching as though in agony. He reminded me of a hen which has had its throat cut in the Muslim way, and is thrown on the ground to die. If the people around had not broken most of his falls he might have injured himself. As it was, he complained to me on the following day of the soreness of his arms and legs. Every now and again he barked like a dog. In describing these spasms Nuer say that the spirit wrestles (*kuer*) with the man it possesses.

At the end of a particularly violent seizure, Rainen, who in his exertions had divested himself of the skin over his head, sprang at the prophet, tore his rattle from his hands, and sat

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in front of him, shaking it violently and barking. At this point the prophet called for his pipe, and after lighting it and puffing at it for a while he began to question the spirit *nai* in Rainen, and it answered through Rainen's lips. It was very difficult to follow what the spirit said because Rainen spoke in a jerky, guttural voice very different from his usual voice and he hiccuped and barked a good deal as well. 'The speech of Rainen was wiped out (*woc*). It was pressed down his gullet.' I was, however, able to follow part of what the spirit said. It said that it was *nai* and that it wanted a gift. It had waited till Nhial had returned to the village because it knew that he would be able to provide a gift out of the wages he had received from me, and it had then taken hold of Galuak. It admitted that it had received gifts from Rainen in the past but it now wanted a final gift, and it promised that if it were satisfied now it would trouble Galuak no more. If it needed anything further it would seize another person and get it from him. It pointed out, however, that it was not the only spirit troubling Galuak. The spirit of Luak, Galuak's paternal grandfather, had also taken hold of him. This was *kwoth doar*, a nature sprite, and it was worrying Galuak because the family had not dedicated a cow of their herd to it. Both Galuak's father and mother are of Dinka descent and the family have a number of different spirits attached to them.

It was very noticeable during the ceremony how those present, as is often the case in Nuer ceremonies, chatted among themselves, asked for tobacco, and so on. They evidently, especially the children, enjoyed the spectacle. I was surprised, however, this being the first and only ceremony of its kind I witnessed, at the familiar and off-handed way in which the prophet spoke to the spirit, calling it '*wuta*', 'man'—almost 'old chap'—, bargaining with it about the oblation demanded, and insisting that when the sacrifice had been made it should keep its promise and leave Galuak alone. Galuak himself showed little concern with what was going on. While prophet and spirit were conversing he removed the skin from over his head, walked casually about the hut looking for a pipe, and then filled it with tobacco and sat puffing at it by his father's side. The only part he took in the proceedings was to reply to a question put to him by his maternal uncle, that he had not had sexual relations with a kinswoman. It was thought advisable to make certain that there had been no incest because

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they wanted to be sure that when *nai* and the other spirit had been satisfied there would be nothing further to prevent a speedy recovery. As for Rainen, if his manner of speech was that of a man out of his senses, its content showed reflection and purpose. What he, or the spirit in him, said was aimed at compelling Nhial to hand over his wages for the purchase from government herds of beasts for sacrifices, an object Rainen had been vainly trying to attain for some days previous to the ceremony. Rainen also justified himself, in what the spirit said, for the slaughter of a number of beasts to appease his various spirits, for which his family had criticized him for extravagance. They felt that too much of the family property was being devoted to religious purposes, whereas the spirit made it clear that, far from having made too many sacrifices, he had not made enough. Had he made more, Galuak would not have fallen sick. Religious and personal issues were interwoven in the spirit's declarations.

When the spirit had ceased speaking we left the hut, and Galuak's paternal uncle, Dol, went to chop down a branch of the 'wild date' (*Balanites aegyptiaca*), a tree to which *nai* is said to be very partial, to erect it as a shrine (*riek*) to the spirit near the hut. When it had been erected a clump of *tuat* grass was dug up by the roots and planted at the side of the branch in a hole first filled with water, it being the dry season. A he-goat—by this time one had been procured—was then brought out and the prophet waved his spear, decorated with ostrich plumes, over its back and made a short invocation, telling the spirit that they were honouring it, saying that it would now cease to trouble Galuak, and asking God that the people might rest in peace. He then cut the goat's throat. It was later eaten by himself and his two friends. The people of the homestead did not partake of its flesh, but when it had been cooked some children were called from a nearby homestead and given pieces of the meat and told to run back to their home with them. The Nuer said of this: *'ca gat kwoth nang cieng'*, 'the son of God is taken home'. Finally a *buor*, a mud mound in the shape of an ordinary kitchen windscreen, was erected near the shrine. On the following evening Rainen rubbed ashes on the back of a cow of his herd and dedicated it to the spirit of his father. By so doing he felt that he had appeased the second spirit which was troubling his son.

The relations between Nuer and their spirits centre in these

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for example, people who abstain from eating
are, at any rate often, those who have had some heart trouble and 776*
have been cured by massage by a man who respects hearts. They 177
now respect hearts themselves and can cure others. Again, a man 262
told me that he would not eat liver because a forebear had burnt 755●
himself when roasting liver and had died of the burns. I was told, and it is highly probable, that these abstentions do not last for more than a generation or two. In the same way some people—here again they are said to be Dinka or of Dinka descent—respect certain diseases, or rather their symptoms. These are people who have suffered from the diseases, have been cured by others who respect them, and can now treat sufferers in their turn. I believe that usually, if not invariably, this is a relationship between an individual and a disease and that the respect is not shared by his kinsmen or descendants. Among the diseases recorded by Miss Soule[1] or myself which people respect are *kerker*, a yaws condition, *weth*, also a yaws infection of some kind, *rieny*, convulsions in infants, *gueng*, an abscess, *tanglok*, tubercular abscess, *lili*, hipjoint disease, *kor*, myalgia of the lumbar region (p. 185), and *thiang*, dysentery (pp. 187–8). I discuss later totemistic relationships of individuals to totems of female forebears.

II

It is essential to an understanding of Nuer totemism that it 776*
should be appreciated that Nuer respect the natural species or class of objects because they regard them as being in some manner emblems or representations of Spirit. A European observer may easily be led astray by a Nuer speaking of his totem, as he ordinarily does, as his *kwoth*, but he means no more by this than that the totem in some special way belongs to a spirit which also makes itself known to him concretely in that species. Doubtless, as the spirit is only known in and through the species, spirit and species can never be wholly dissociated, but Nuer quite explicitly distinguish between them. Those who respect species say that it is the spirits of their totems and not the creatures themselves that they call on for aid, that they sacrifice to, and that they dedicate beasts to; and when we speak about the spirit of a totem it must be understood that what is meant is the spirit for which the totem

[1] *Some Nuer Terms in Relation to the Human Body*, a pamphlet published by the American Mission, Nasser, 1931.

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a conception one has at least to consider all the situations in which it appears in a people's speech or thought.

We have observed that a totemic or totemistic spirit sometimes gives a man certain powers over the totemic species. The rites these people perform might be classed, according to some definitions of the term, as magic, but in the Nuer classification, which is the one we have to follow if we are to delineate their thought and not our own, we are still concerned with a relationship between man and *kwoth*. Nevertheless, with diviners, leeches, owners of nature sprites, and owners of fetishes we are on the periphery of the conception of Spirit, where it becomes more and more embedded in the psychical and material.

Those who practice various forms of divination and leechcraft are known, as in other Nilotic languages, as *tiet*. Their powers come from some minor spirit, which is not, as I understood the Nuer, regarded as entering into and possessing a *tiet*, as spirits of the air and *colwic* possess men, but as having an external relationship to him. We may speak of Spirit so conceived of in relation to the exercise of his special powers as his familiar. If he did not have this familiar he would not be able to perform his functions, which are thought of as petty revelations of Spirit acting in an indirect manner through some traditional device.

The familiar spirits of these specialists may be totemic spirits, such as those of the tree cobra or the lion, but there may be no way of referring to them except in relation to the functions of the specialists, as the spirit of this or that kind of specialist. Nevertheless, they are always thought of on the pattern of the totemic and totemistic spirits, so that there is really little difference, except in manner of speech, beween any *tiet* and such a person as performs rites to control crocodiles or durra-birds. Indeed, anyone who is credited with special powers over nature might be described as a *tiet*, which has the general sense of a person with such powers, a cunning man, so that, for example, the fact that a man has been able to acquire a wife with an unusually small payment of cattle suggests to Nuer the likelihood of his being a *tiet*. However, the word is generally used only for the skills I am about to mention, and a person with other but similar powers derived from a totemic or totemistic relationship who is not so called is spoken of as *gwan kwoth*, owner of a spirit (of whatever it may be). In either case, the familiar may be inherited from father to son.

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•755 The best-known sort of *tiet* is the *tiet gweni*. He divines by throwing mussel shells on the convex surface of a gourd and studying the way they fall. By this means he answers such questions as whether a man will find a lost cow, have success on a journey, or slay a victim in a blood-feud, and whether, if he is on a journey, all at home is well. While engaged in throwing the shells he speaks to his familiar spirit, which is associated with the gourd, perhaps being regarded as in it during the seance. Another sort of specialist of this order is the *tiet dala*. I was told that some of his functions are to aid a man to recover cattle by performing a rite to make the herdsmen inattentive, to aid a man to recover a runaway wife, to win female favours, to exact vengeance in blood-feud, and to avoid enemy spears in fighting. Another sort is the *tiet me ngwet*. She—all I heard of were women—is a leech who removes objects from the bodies of sick persons which have been put there by a *peth*, a witch or possessor of the evil eye. Another sort is the *tiet me monye dholi*, a leech who massages constipated children with his spittle. Other sorts of *tiet* treat barren women, impotent men, and sick calves; and there may be yet others with minor skills.

Nuer do not highly regard these people and have small confidence in them. They are little men and women who perform their petty rites for the benefit of their immediate neighbours and for inconsiderable rewards. They never achieve social prominence, far less tribal renown, and their possession of special powers is not likely to be known outside their own village or its immediate vicinity. But, apart from this, they are regarded as being in themselves something very humble and of quite a different class and order from the prophets, who, whether they achieve great renown or not, are inspired by spirits of the above, whereas these diviners and leeches and other specialists of the same order merely have little spirits of the below as familiars. Were this not to be made clear there would be a danger that Nuer religious ideas and practices might be viewed in false perspective, for they are not all of the same significance for Nuer. Some are important and some are unimportant, and they are of different kinds and of different orders. It was because this was not appreciated by British administrators that the role and nature of the prophets was very largely misunderstood and their treatment of them ill-considered (pp. 303–7). Nuer do not regard all manifestations of Spirit as of equal value, nor do they accept (96) all claims to spiritual guidance at their face value.

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778 Indeed, the fetishes seem only to have been placed in the category of Spirit by the logical necessity of assimilating the powers
x776 attributed to them to some model the Nuer already possessed. They are also of the category of *wal*, medicines, which sharply differentiates them from Spirit proper, but since they can reveal their wants and wishes in speech, move about, and kill people, they seem to Nuer to fall between the two categories. It is to be remarked that the *kulangni* and the *bieli*, which are closer to totemic representations of Spirit, are generally referred to by these names and not, like the totemic spirits, as *kuth*, as though by distinction of name they were being marked off from the other spirits. It should be stressed also, in this connexion, that the fetishes, and to some extent the nature sprites, are spoken of in the plural, as when we speak of angels, devils, goblins, and fairies, showing that they are conceived of as having less individuality than other spirits.

789 It remains only to say a few words about medicines which do not talk, the ordinary *wal*, magical substances which have an efficacy in themselves and do not derive their power from Spirit. Coming to the Nuer from Zandeland, where everyone is a magician and medicines are legion and in daily use, I was at once struck by their negligible quantity and importance in Nuerland, and further experience confirmed my first impression. I mention them chiefly for the reason that their rarity and unimportance are highly indicative of the orientation of Nuer thought, which is always towards Spirit.

789 In speaking of Nuer magic we are faced with the same historical problem that I have mentioned earlier, for all Nuer with whom
177 I have spoken on the subject have said that medicines were almost entirely lacking—only a few are thought to be old—in the days of their fathers and that most of the few medicines they now possess have been taken over from neighbouring peoples. My own view is that ethnological evidences support their statements, but the point that is important for us here is rather that Nuer regard medicines as something foreign and strange. They think easily in terms of Spirit but not in terms of medicines, the idea of which as it obtains among their Sudanic neighbours they seem scarcely able to grasp.

789 Nuer medicines of today are mostly of the nature of talismans
● 165 for fortune—in hunting, fishing, courting, and travelling. I did not find that Nuer had much faith in them. Medicines are also

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used, sometimes as infusions, to protect a person from, or cure him of, sickness brought about by breach of an interdiction. There are also medicines, or people say there are, against the evil eye, monorchids, children conceived by suckling mothers, and fetishes. Nuer also have a few simples for treating common ailments, such as constipation, throat and lung complaints, fevers, and swellings, and for treating sick cattle. These medicines are thought to be efficacious only in very small matters or as secondary to the performance of a religious rite. No *wal* is of any use, at any rate by itself, as protection against the consequences of a serious breach of an interdiction or in any violent sickness. Only prayer and sacrifice are then of avail; and this holds, Nuer who know anything about them think, for European medicines—quinine, for example, as well as for their own.

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context of their common humanity, as, for example, when furious storms are raging, in times of severe drought and famine, or when a man is seriously ill, then God alone, or in certain circumstances one of his hypostases by which he is figured in relation to some particular natural phenomenon, is addressed and he is not, as it were, divided by a variety of titles along the lines of the social structure. This may also be to a large extent the case even where different social groups are involved, so long as they are not antagonistic but have a common interest and intention. I give one such illustration.

A youth in a village where I was residing was badly wounded in the shoulder by a spear in a fight with a man of the next village. His antagonist had not intended to kill him and the people of the two villages were on good terms, so his kinsmen at once sent the spear with which the wound had been inflicted to the injured youth's home with expressions of regret and wishes for a speedy recovery. The elders of the wounded lad's home bent the point of the spear and placed it point downwards in a pot of cold water. This was done to lessen the pain of the wound, especially when it was washed, and to cool the inflammation. Next morning the wounder's village sent us a deputation, leading a goat for sacrifice. By this further indication of their regrets and of their willingness to pay compensation at once should the lad die they anticipated a blood-feud. It was hoped in any case that the danger of death would be obviated by the sacrifice of the goat. The wound would, as the Nuer put it, 'be finished with the goat'.

Before the animal was sacrificed the visitors consecrated it by rubbing ashes on its back. It was then tied to a stake opposite the hut of the wounded youth's maternal grandmother and an invocation was delivered over it by a man called Lel, a leopard-skin priest and also a prophet, who had been summoned from a distance to officiate, partly, I think, because his presence would give greater importance, and therefore perhaps efficacy, to the ceremony and partly because it would be a further insurance for a peaceful outcome to the incident. His address was largely taken up with reiterations that the youth would not die and with giving to God and the people a lengthy and detailed account of how the accident had occurred. He sacrificed the goat at the conclusion of his speech. Our home party then brought forward a wether and it was also consecrated with ashes. Afterwards a man of the home

789 is said to have been paid in ransom to the river. The river was
782 bought, as it were, by her sacrifice; just as the hippopotamus had
[538] to buy the river in one of the Nuer just-so stories. Fox had found hippopotamus on land, where he had been created, and exacted from him, in payment for taking him to a river, the flesh around his mouth—which accounts for his funny face today. When they arrived at the river hippopotamus had to pay it (*kok*) the marrow of his leg bones before it would receive him—which accounts for their having no marrow, so Nuer say, in them today. 'Bought' and 'buy' are renderings I discuss below.

782 When in serious sickness an animal is sacrificed Nuer may say
755 *'ca kwoth kok ke yang'*, 'God is paid a cow [in ransom]'. I was present when a Nuer was defending himself against silent disapproval on the part of his family and kinsmen of his frequent sacrifices. He had been given to understand that it was felt that he was destroying the herd from inordinate love of meat. He said that this was not true. The oxen he had killed—and he had killed his own favourite ox among them—had been sacrificed to his mother-in-law's and wife's spirit *deng*, which came from Dinka-land and was frequently troubling his children and his wife and her brother with sickness. It was all very well for his family to say that he had destroyed the herd, but he had killed the cattle for their sakes. It was *'kokene yiekien ke yang'*, 'the ransom of their lives with cattle'. He repeated this phrase many times as one by one he recounted cases of serious sickness in his family and described the ox he had sacrificed on each occasion to placate the spirit *deng*. If his sons saw fit to complain let them regard their sisters. Would they not get the cattle of their sisters' bridewealth? And were not the cattle killed to save their sisters' lives?

782 The word *kuk* would seem therefore to suggest that God, or a
789 spirit, is placed by the sacrifice under an obligation. A woman says 'God, take thy cow and give me a child', and Nuer say of the river-spirit that 'it is given a gift and then it gives life to the people'. The child and the life are given to suppliants in return for the gifts they make. The action of the rite is not effective in itself. God, or a spirit, is not constrained by the sacrifice to grant the favour asked for. An animal sacrificed to God is his animal anyhow, and what he gives the suppliant in return is a *muc*, a free gift. Nevertheless, my impression was, at any rate where spirits of the air and of the earth are concerned, that Nuer feel that the recipient of a sacrifice

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is at fault if it does not fulfil its part of the bargain. A costly sacrifice having been made, *cuong*, right or justice, is on the human side in the matter. Thus the man of whom I was speaking above said during his harangue that after all the sacrifices he had made to the spirit *deng* on account of sickness in his family, his little daughter had been bitten by a snake and died. He had given all these oxen to *deng* and look what had happened! He felt aggrieved and had consulted a prophet of *deng* who had told him that if the spirit had taken his daughter it would compensate him for his loss; and it had indeed done so by giving him twins: '*ca col e kwoth ke cuek*', 'it [the death of the daughter] was compensated by the spirit with twins'. The use of the word *col*, as will be seen later, here implies that the spirit was in debt to the man. This Nuer Job complained that the spirit had only compensated him because he told it that he had had enough of it and that it could take all his children if it pleased, for then he would have finished with it because it would have nothing more to take from him.

The word *kok* occurs in the other Nilotic languages with much the same range of meaning, outside its sacrificial usage, as it has today in Nuer, for one most frequently hears it used today to describe the purchasing of goods from an Arab merchant. That a word which had chiefly, and perhaps primarily, a sacrificial meaning should come to be employed for the recent practice of buying something from a shop, a commercial sense it has also in other Nilotic tongues, sheds some light not only on Nuer ideas about trading but also on their ideas about sacrifice. Since the present range of meaning of the word includes buying and selling one might say that God or a spirit is 'bought' by sacrifice. The dangers of translation that beset one at every step in an attempt to understand and make intelligible Nuer religious ideas are here very apparent, for once we use the word 'bought' the associations it has among ourselves rush in to colour the Nuer conception. But Nuer do not regard purchase from an Arab merchant in the way in which we regard purchase from a shop. It is not to them an impersonal transaction, and they have no idea of price and currency in our sense. Their idea of a purchase is that you give something to a merchant who is thereby put under an obligation to help you. At the same time you ask him for something you need from his shop and he ought to give it to you because, by taking your gift, he has entered into a reciprocal relationship with

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782 437 196 you. Hence *kok* has the sense of either 'to buy' or 'to sell'. The two acts are an expression of a single relationship of reciprocity. As an Arab merchant regards the transaction rather differently misunderstandings arise. In the Nuer way of looking at the matter what is involved in an exchange of this kind is a relation between persons rather than between things. It is the merchant who is 'bought' rather than the goods, just as it is God or a spirit who is bounden by sacrifice; or it can be better put by saying that the partners, Nuer and merchant, man and God, *kok* each other. The general notion conveyed by the word is therefore that of exchange. This sense covers, as do our own words 'ransom' and 'redemption', both religious and commercial usages. In both there is the idea of a relationship expressed in gift and counter-gift. The mere fact that the word has been made use of to denote what we regard as plain and simple commerce shows that some idea of a bargain is implied in its sacrificial use. Whatever else it may also be, sacrifice can be regarded, as Socrates says in the *Euthyphro*, as being in a sense a 'commercial technique', a way of doing business between gods and men. A bargain is struck. There is an exchange. This is further shown by the use of the verb *luel*, not in reference to any particular kind or situation of sacrifice but in invocations at personal sacrifices. A consideration of its use shows us better what sort of exchange Nuer sacrifice is.

782 755 One of Professor Westermann's texts records a sacrificial invocation made on behalf of a sick man. I would translate it as follows: 'God, what is this? Leave him with us; let him recover. Turn about, take thy cow. It has been decreed for the life. It is thou who hast spoken thus. Take the cow that it may be in exchange for the life (*bi je luele yei*). It is thou who hast created us; it is the cow which is exchanged for life (*e bi yang a luel ne yei*). Take the goat and the cucumber; and let him recover! In what have we erred? Give us the life. Thou art our father. Why must we always suffer? Give us the life, we pray thee, our father.'[1]

437 196 In other contexts the word *luel* means 'to exchange' or 'to change'. Something takes the place of another thing equal to it —a simple exchange of two things considered to be of more or less

[1] Op. cit., pp. 116–17. The sentence 'Take the goat and the cucumber' would not occur in any actual invocation, for the two things would not be sacrificed at the same time. Whoever spoke the text has inserted a gloss in the sense of 'Take the cow [ox], that is to say, the goat or the cucumber' [as the case may be].

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792 A very complex representation would seem to be involved here, in which ideas about persons and ideas about Spirit are mixed together with regard to a man who in one way of thinking about him is man and in another way of thinking about him is Spirit and who is also conceived of as both man and Spirit.

As explained in Chapter II, the chief function of such prophets
792 as gained any considerable following and became political figures
787 was their hermeneutic role in warfare. They spoke the directions of the spirits of the air for raids on the Dinka[1] and for resistance to the slavers and the administration and made sacrifices to them. Their other functions were subsidiary and were exercised by lesser
● [755] prophets also: healing, particularly curing barrenness of women, staying of epidemics lethal to men or cattle, and exorcism of troublesome spirits. They were also credited with power to foretell events and with a more than usual insight (*gwic*). A prophet heals people by rubbing his spittle on them or by sprinkling them with water, milk, or butter, and his inspiration gives him foreknowledge, but he, like anyone else, relies on sacrifice in times of trouble; and he may be asked to sacrifice for any purpose except on those occasions reserved to the priesthood. People ask him to sacrifice on their behalf, not because they cannot make sacrifice themselves, but because sacrifice by him is felt to have special efficacy in that he has a special and intimate association with Spirit. Nevertheless, though prophets, like priests, may sacrifice on behalf of other people, the distinctive character of the prophet is not, as it is of the priest, his sacrificial role, but his revelational role deriving from spiritual inspiration. Hence, so I have been told, women, as well as men, may become minor prophets, though I believe only an old, and possibly barren, woman, of whom Nuer say '*coa wut*', 'she has become a man', would do so. A female prophet would not sacrifice.

792 I mentioned briefly, because I have treated the matter elsewhere,
668 the political significance of the Nuer priests, their office being a politico-religious institution of the traditional social order. The prophets can also be regarded from the same point of view, as a politico-religious institution which has recently emerged in answer to changes in the social order. It may be hard to believe that people with prophetic powers have not always existed among the Nuer, but there is no evidence that they have; and all Nuer with whom

[1] They acquired substantial herds from their share of the booty.